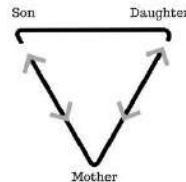




## SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF A FAMILY

1. Most people do not know how to communicate.  
*Under stress the communication breaks down ever further.*
2. Triangulation. Family members sometimes try to send messages to one person through another.  
*Example: A son is angry with his sister and instead of talking directly to her, he tells his mom how mad he is. He is hoping that his mother will tell his sister how he feels.*



3. Families by nature are very protective of one another.  
*Example: "I need to discuss this illness, but I know it will be too hard on my wife"*
4. Loyalty is deep-seated.  
*Example: Often when sexual abuse is happening, children will not say anything about it because of their loyalty to the family.*
5. Families get great benefits from just hanging out with each other *and being present with one another...*

*Even if nothing is said!*

6. Hub relationships are important.  
*Example: If the parents are close and share, the children probably will as well. If the parents are closed and do not share their feelings or concerns, it is likely that the children won't either.*
7. Historical issues will surface in times of crisis.  
*Example: Some may grieve past losses at same time as the most recent. Sometimes it is hard to figure which loss they are grieving. Sometimes that can cause a person to feel guilty.*

*Example: Hurt feelings may surface among family members when past losses are remembered. "You weren't there for dad, so why are you here now with mom!" "I remember the time you..."*

8. Mutual pretence is common in families.  
*To be open means that everyone knows the situation and can talk about it freely. This rarely happens. To be closed means that no one talks about the situation to the point that some may not be aware of the diagnosis. When the family is engaged in*



mutual pretence, it means that everyone knows what is happening but no one talks about it.

*It is important to remember who is in charge. If the client does not wish to talk about it, then that is what should happen in his/her presence. If some family members want to discuss it, encourage them to do so among themselves (leave the client out of it.)*

*Sometimes the dying person may wish to share thoughts and feelings around their illness and impending death while other family members do not wish to talk about it. This is the appropriate time for a hospice volunteer to be assigned. The volunteer allows the dying person to talk about whatever they need to without upsetting family members who don't want to be involved in the discussion.*